

## Nutriline Audiofile #25: Consistency

This is Dr. Chet Zelasko.

Here's a question for you. If you take a supplement that comes in a one-month supply, how many doses should you have left at the end of the month? That's easy, right? None!

Unfortunately, that doesn't happen often enough because people miss doses. Then, they complain their supplement isn't working! That's why it's essential to take supplements consistently.

First, it's important to understand that many times, you *won't* feel any different when taking a supplement – even if you're taking it consistently. That's because the nutrients are going about their business: boosting your immune system, strengthening your bones, or fighting free radicals. You may not feel it happening, but it's going on just the same. Plus, there's no way to tell what illnesses or health problems you *didn't* get because you were taking a supplement. Some people do feel the difference right away when taking supplements for joint or brain health, but not always.

Another reason it's hard to tell if a supplement is working is called "sub-clinical deficiency".<sup>i</sup> In westernized countries, nearly everyone gets enough nutrients to prevent acute vitamin deficiencies like the vitamin C deficiency, scurvy, or the vitamin D deficiency, rickets. But, we still may have small deficiencies of those nutrients that can be hard to detect. In fact, often these small deficiencies won't show up for years.

Preventing sub-clinical deficiency is the reason it's important to continue taking the basic supplements recommended by your doctor consistently, whether you feel any different or not. For example, researchers have found women trying to prevent osteoporosis need to take calcium and vitamin D supplements more than 80% of the time for more than seven years to see a reduction in fractures!<sup>ii</sup>

There are some traits that determine who's more likely to take supplements consistently.<sup>iiiiv</sup> For example, women do a better job taking supplements consistently than men. People who believe the supplement will help them also take supplements more regularly. Finally, the input you've been given from healthcare professionals determines how well you'll follow a supplement plan. The problem is that some things you read might exaggerate the benefits of supplements, and opinions from healthcare professionals can vary.

The best advice is to take a practical approach and remember that taking supplements is a habit. First, organize your supplements and put them in a location where you'll see them every day – whether it's on the kitchen counter or next to your toothpaste in the bathroom. Second, take your supplements at the same time every day. Most supplements should be taken with food, so taking your supplements at meal time is usually a good schedule.

Don't forget, the regular use of dietary supplements as directed by your doctor can benefit your health. But in order to get those benefits, we have to take our supplements consistently. If you do, your body will love you for it!

This is Dr. Chet Zelasko saying health is a choice. Choose wisely.

<sup>1</sup> Heaney RP. Nutrients, Endpoints, and the Problem of Proof. *Journal of Nutrition*. 2008. 138:1591-1595.

<sup>1</sup> Jackson RD, et al. Calcium plus vitamin D supplementation and the risk of fractures. *N Engl J Med*. 2006 Feb 16;354(7):669-83.

<sup>1</sup> Brunner R, et al. Predictors of adherence in the Women's Health Initiative Calcium and Vitamin D Trial. *Behav Med*. 2009 Winter; 34(4):145-55.

<sup>1</sup> Read, M, et al. Vitamin supplementation practices: health/nutrition education implications. *J Consumer Studies and Home Economics* 1996. 20(4):407-414.

---

<sup>i</sup> Heaney RP. Nutrients, Endpoints, and the Problem of Proof. *Journal of Nutrition*. 2008. 138:1591-1595.

<sup>ii</sup> Jackson RD, et al. Calcium plus vitamin D supplementation and the risk of fractures. *N Engl J Med*. 2006 Feb 16;354(7):669-83.

<sup>iii</sup> Brunner R, et al. Predictors of adherence in the Women's Health Initiative Calcium and Vitamin D Trial. *Behav Med*. 2009 Winter; 34(4):145-55.

<sup>iv</sup> Read, M, et al. Vitamin supplementation practices: health/nutrition education implications. *J Consumer Studies and Home Economics* 1996. 20(4):407-414.